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State Transportation Board Elects New Commissioner

State Representative Vance Smith, Jr., R-Pine Mountain, chairman of the House Transportation Committee has been named commissioner of the Georgia Department of Transportation. Smith was unanimously elected by the State Transportation Board. He will take office Thursday, June 25.

“I am honored and humbled to have been chosen and excited to start work,” Smith said. “There are great challenges facing the Department; I see these challenges more as opportunities to make a good transportation system the best it can be. I look forward to working with the Board, the Governor, the General Assembly, our partner agencies and the experienced Georgia DOT staff to make these opportunities reality.”

Board Chairman Bill Kuhlke, Jr., said the \$2.4 billion-per-year, 5,400-employee agency is fortunate to gain the leadership and perspective of Smith. “Vance knows transportation and no one is more committed to improving it than he is. He understands this Department’s greatest need is to have adequate resources to build and maintain a multimodal transportation system that will help alleviate congestion, promote safety and pave the way for the infrastructure and mobility necessary to promote economic development. He worked tirelessly for additional and much needed transportation funding, and his legislative acumen will help us secure it.”

Smith succeeds Gerald Ross who has served as interim commissioner since February and who now will return to his previous position as the Department’s chief engineer. “I can’t say enough about the magnificent job Gerald has done under very difficult circumstances,” Kuhlke commented. “We’re very much indebted to him.”



Commissioner Elect Vance Smith addresses the full board Thursday.

BOARD ACTIVITY JUNE 17-18
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

New FY10 Officers were elected by the State Transportation Board. The group unanimously re-elected Bill Kuhlke, Jr., of Augusta, as its chairman for the coming year and similarly chose Board Member Rudy Bowen, of Suwanee, to serve as vice chairman. Kuhlke represents the 10th Congressional District; Bowen the 7th.

Kuhlke’s and Bowen’s one-year leadership terms will begin July 1. Kuhlke also is beginning his second five-year term as a member of the Board, whose 13 members serve as the governing body of the Georgia Department of Transportation; Bowen is midway through his first Board term.

The Board approved the letting of 35 projects, valued at \$290 million, for the July letting. Thirty-four of the projects are ARRA/Stimulus projects and one is a regular program design-build project. The Department is letting 27 of the projects, local governments are letting the remaining eight and 15 of the projects are in Economically Distressed Areas (EDAs). Additionally, the Board voted to approve the first group of projects in Phase 2 of ARRA so the Department can prepare them for an August letting.

Other agenda items of the Board included an update on the status of HOV to HOT on I-85, and a review of various legal items involving the Department. Six (6) of the Board Committees held meetings in advance of the full Board meeting; Commissioner Search, Equal Access, Intermodal and Finance, and a joint effort of the Alternative Financing/Program Delivery.

American Reinvestment and Recovery Act 2009 Update

Governor Perdue has officially certified all projects in Phase 1 to US-DOT Secretary Ray LaHood. All of Phase 1 projects have been let or are scheduled for letting next month.

The Department has successfully met the Federal requirement to obligate 50% (\$312 million) of the ARRA funds designated for transportation. Evaluation of projects for Phase 2 is ongoing, and the Board has approved the first group of projects to be sent to Governor Perdue for certification.

Project bids from Phase 1 lettings have averaged less money than anticipated. The Department worked with FHWA to ensure that any funds remaining due to lower contract amounts may be used towards additional projects eligible for stimulus dollars.

In addition to road and bridge projects, the Department has been awarded funds for aviation projects and transit projects. To date, Governor Perdue has certified 22 local transit system projects worth \$38 million.

Local airport projects were selected directly by the Federal Aviation Administration:

- Adel-Cook County Airport
\$656,000 - Construct Parallel Taxiway
- Alma-Bacon County Airport
\$734,000 - Construct Parallel Taxiway
- Brunswick-McKinnon-St. Simons Airport
\$5,864,000 - Rehabilitation of Terminal Area Apron
- McRae-Telfair-Wheeler County Airport
\$890,000 - Rehabilitate Runway 3/21
- Peachtree City-Falcon Field Airport
\$2,000,000 - Construct Area "C" Aircraft Parking Apron

Next Board Meeting July 16th—Atlanta

